

HEBER VALLEY GUN CLUB ROUND ROBIN

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Herald Photo/Patrick J. Krohn

Randy Brooks, owner of Apex Rifle and Barrel Company of American Fork inspects a completed barrel.

These rifles 'Classics' but not cheap

Apex barrels precision manufactured

By ROD COLLETT
Associate Sports Editor

to order a titanium barrel, which is half the weight of steel, it's a \$1,200 option.

per second velocity increase and the accuracy is excellent. We are the only barrel manufacturers doing that presently."

Brooks' company has managed

"Some people might say that a pound doesn't make a lot of difference. But after eight or 10 hours in the wilderness a pound does mean a lot."

AMERICAN FORK — Most hunters are satisfied to use weapons that are efficient, reliable and sometimes passed down from father to son. You know, that old 30-30 Winchester or that .30-06 that's heavy but shoots straight.

In fact, this writer uses an old 30-40 Krag, circa 1898, as his primary weapon of choice. It's old, heavy and shoots shells that seem more like mortars but it's deadly.

But in this day of lightweight plastics, metals and synthetic stocks, Randy Brooks' Apex Rifle and Barrel Company of American Fork is setting a new standard in the rifle industry.

Brooks purchased Apex Barrel last year and merged it with his custom rifle shop and a company called The Rifle Works out of Houston, Texas.

Now housed under one roof, the Apex Rifle and Barrel Company in American Fork harkens back to America's industrial roots — machined parts, precision craftsmanship and well-paid jobs. No hamburgers wages here.

For example, if a hunter wants

The Apex rifle is definitely not cheap.

"We specialize in making lightweight rifles," said Brooks. "Our lightweight gun weighs only 4¾ pounds and we use either stainless steel or 4150 or 4140 chrome-moly. Generally, these are accepted barrel materials. However, we order our barrel materials from the mill. They are virgin materials and contain no hard spots. These are machined according to our specifications. They are cut-rifled and not bottomed so there are no stress (weak spots) put in the barrel when it's made."

One of the unique things about Apex barrels is the "twist" configuration.

"Normally, the twist of the rifling is what makes the bullet spin and stabilizes it. We have a progressive twist, instead of a stationary twist throughout the length of the barrel. For example, on the .30 caliber, we'll start it at 13 twists and it progressively gets tighter and goes to a 10 twist when the bullet exits. You get 40 to 80 feet

to eliminate excess rifle weight by using new lightweight materials on the stock and recoil pads.

"Every aspect of the rifle is light. The stocks are made of reinforced Kevlar and graphite."

Brooks said the lightweight stocks tend to flex when the gun is fired and the recoil pad and Kevlar-graphite combination absorb that.

"In wood stock rifles you don't get that flex."

Obviously, having lighter materials, both in the barrel and stock, means less poundage a hunter has to carry on his shoulder and back.

"The average rifle weighs in at nine pounds. Ours weigh half that much. When you deer or elk hunting in high mountain areas and have to drag an animal and carry a rifle, that extra three or four pounds does make a ton of difference."

The cost of the lightweight rifle is \$1,895 and the Apex Classic goes for \$1,295. The difference in the cost is reflected in the weight. The Classic weighs a pound more than the Apex.

majority of the weight off the rear or butt of the stock.

"We've taken the weight off the action and the rear of the stock. That gives our rifle a tilt forward that you normally don't get with a lightweight rifle."

Another division of Apex rifle is making custom weapons upon request.

"We also have wood rifles that start at \$3,500. The highest priced rifle we have ever sold is \$18,500. So we can literally build a rifle to a person's specifications. On the \$18,500 rifle, the wood blank (stock) cost \$900."

In some cases, a sportman orders a rifle for a particular kind of big game hunt.

"We are currently building a rifle for a gentleman from Houston, Texas. We are even designing the cartridge, rifle and loading the bullet. Since we don't build double barrel rifles here, we are having the action and stock fitted in Italy. We made the barrels. The rifle,

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RIFLES:

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called a .750 Nitro Express, will cost about \$105,000 and he'll have \$30,000 in the ammunition alone."

Other rifles Brooks has made include a custom design for the Secretary of Defense for Mexico.

"He was a very good customer and has since ordered some other fiberglass rifles that are less expensive. One of the rifles he ordered was a nice, wood custom rifle that he took to Tanzania which cost \$9,500."

"We don't sell a lot of these high end rifles. We'll sell less than a dozen, real fine rifles per year. The fiberglass and Kevlar-graphite rifles are our main business."